Food Labeling Workshop slated for May 17-18

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Andrea Graves
FAPC Business and Marketing Specialist

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Oklahoma State University’s Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center is partnering with the Food and Drug Administration to hold a public Food Labeling Workshop to provide information about FDA food labeling regulations and other related subjects to the regulated industry, particularly small businesses and startups.

The two-day workshop will be held May 17-18, 2010, in room 201 of the FAPC on the OSU campus. The workshop will cover numerous topics, such as mandatory label elements, nutrition labeling requirements, health and nutrition claims, the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 and other special labeling issues such as exemptions.

“The FDA Labeling guidelines can be quite confusing, and many food labels currently on the market are not compliant,” said Andrea Graves, FAPC business and marketing specialist. “We definitely see a need to give processors some help in this area.”

In addition to Graves, specialists presenting at the workshop include David Arvelo, FDA small business representative; William McGlynn, FAPC horticultural products processing specialist; and Darren Scott, FAPC sensory specialist.

Arvelo said while Good Manufacturing Practice regulations are the most important requirements to help ensure the safety of food products, the labeling regulations also plays an important role in ensuring foods are safe.

“From Oct. 1, 2008, to Sept. 30, 2009, the FDA-regulated food industry conducted 518 voluntary recalls of volatile food products in the market. Of these, 63 (12%) were caused by undeclared food allergen ingredients,” Arvelo said. “Of those, 44 (70%) were classified as Class I recalls (undeclared peanuts, tree nuts, seafood, milk, egg, or soy ingredients). Class I recalls are those that present a situation in which there is a reasonable probability that the use of, or exposure to, a volatile product will cause serious adverse health consequences or death.”

Not only is this a series of lectures, but a true hands-on workshop where participants learn by doing, Graves said. Small businesses and startup companies would benefit greatly from this workshop.

“Many of our clients are unfamiliar with the rules and regulations of developing a correct food label,” Graves said. “This workshop will provide the necessary information and tools that will allow food companies to understand the criteria that needs to be used in proper product labeling.”

The cost of this workshop is $400. To register for the event, call or e-mail Karen Smith at 405-744-6071 or karenl.smith@okstate.edu, or register online at http://www.fapc.biz/foodlabeling.html. The registration deadline is May 3, 2010.